

VZCZCXRO5392
RR RUEHCI
DE RUEHKA #6844 3620935
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 280935Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2885
INFO RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0250
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 7692
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1408
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 8845
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1570
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 9527
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 0611
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L DHAKA 006844

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/28/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: AWAMI LEAGUE SIGNS ELECTORAL PACT WITH ISLAMIC PARTY

Classified By: Ambassador Patricia A. Butenis; Reason 1.4(d)

¶1. (SBU) News on December 24 that the Awami League (AL) would contest the elections was overshadowed by reports the AL had entered into an election pact with an Islamic party. The press reported that AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Khelafat-e-Majlish, a splinter faction of the Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), a member of the BNP's Four-Party Alliance. Awami League officials later confirmed the press reports.

¶2. (SBU) Several smaller Islamic parties are already participating in an alliance with the AL. The concessions it made to bring Khelafat-e-Majlish on board, however, and the publicity surrounding the agreement, are unprecedented for the Awami League. The agreement stipulates the following if the AL-led alliance is elected:

A) No law will be enacted that contradicts Koranic values and sharia.

B) Steps will be taken to ensure government recognition of certifications and degrees from kwami madrassahs.

C) Laws will be enacted acknowledging Mohammad as the last and greatest prophet.

D) Laws will be enacted criminalizing criticism of the "prophets and their associates."

E) Certified Islamic leaders will be permitted to issue fatwas.

¶3. (SBU) Initially, several AL leaders denied the agreement. Presidium member Suranjit Sengupta claimed the story was "baseless" and a "hoax." Organizing Secretary Aktaruzzaman told us that it was not possible, and offered to call Abdul Jalil to verify the story was false. In the press, anonymous "disgruntled" AL leaders attributed the decision to a small clique of advisors around Sheikh Hasina, including AL Presidium members Kazi Zafarullah and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, and businessman Salman Rahman.

¶4. (C) Later in the day, once Jalil had confirmed the story in the press, several of the AL's partners declared that the memorandum of understanding was "inconsistent" with the Grand Alliance's common platform. Liberal Democratic Party Joint Secretary General Firoz Hassan said that the pact, which he

SIPDIS

said they received no prior notice of, was prompting the

party to rethink its participation in the AL's "Grand Alliance." Business and civil leaders have also criticized the agreement, while some editorials claim the agreement marks the end of the Awami League as the party of secularism.

15. (C) Comment: The Awami League has long castigated the BNP for its willingness to include "militants" from the IOJ in its coalition. Nonetheless, with the elections on the line, the AL's leadership has shown it is ready to go to almost any length to secure a winning coalition.
BUTENIS